

POSITION

AND

DUTIES OF THE NORTH

WITH

REGARD TO SLAVERY.

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POSITION AND DUTIES OF THE NORTH WITH REGARD TO SLAVERY.

It has been common, both at the South and the North, to deny not only the duty, but the right of Northern men to discuss the subject of slavery. The attempt has been made to draw around the Africans in bondage a line of circumvallation, which philanthropy, sympathy, nay, not even calm, dispassionate investigation can cross with impunity. This line, however, we cannot hold sacred. For the Africans are within the pale of human brotherhood, which Christianity has marked for us; and the fact, that they are part and parcel of our own body politic, certainly cannot render them less our brethren. Nor, on the other hand, can the fact, that they belong to States which wield some of the attributes of independent sovereignty, rightfully exclude them from our sympathy, unless we have been wrong in sympathizing with the Greeks and Poles, and with the Asiatic tributaries of Great Britain, with whose oppressors we surely have as little political connection as with the Southern States of our own Confederacy. Is it said that the Constitution and laws of the Union preclude our action in the premises, and therefore should suppress our sympathy, or at least the free utterance of it? We deny that the Constitution or fundamental laws of the Union put this subject beyond the reach of our political action; and, if they did, and it should still appear that God had placed us under religious obligations to the enslaved, we cannot for a moment admit that human compacts or enactments are valid against the divine law. Is it peremptorily asserted, that we at the North have no responsibilities or duties with reference to slavery? We still will contend for the right of trying this question ourselves, inasmuch as the question of responsibility or of duty can never be answered by others in our stead. We say not at the outset that it is our right or duty to act upon this subject; but merely maintain the right, nay, the duty of inquiry,—of determining, by the free exercise of our own judgment, whether and how far we at the North are accountable for the wrongs and evils of slavery,—whether and how far Providence has entrusted to us the power, and given to us the means of decisive influence and

action in the cause of emancipation. To put and answer these inquiries is the object of the present article.

We will first define the position of the people of the North with reference to slavery, and our position will determine our duties.

In the first place, we stand in undoubted relations of brotherhood to the entire slave population; and, however much or little we may be able to do for them, they are legitimate objects of our interest, sympathy, and intercession; nor can it be questioned that we should hold ourselves in readiness to perform in their behalf any brotherly office, which implies no trespass upon the rights or well-being of others.

In the next place, we have with us at the North not a few of the African race, with whom we have immediate social relations, and our treatment of whom will be determined mainly by our feelings towards their race as a whole. These negroes are among us, as the outcast Pariahs are in Hindoostan. They are generally excluded from our common schools, and in some places are left without any provision for their education. From some churches they are shut out, and in others seated in a solitary loft above the organ, forbidden so much as to stand on the same floor with their white brethren in the house of Him, who "hath made of one blood all nations of men," nay, not permitted to kneel at the sacramental altar, till the last white communicant has retired to his seat. There are very many, who seem to look upon the whole race with loathing and detestation. Now if there be anything wrong in this state of things, compassion for and sympathy with the slave are more likely than aught else to set it right. But, if the great body of the African race in our country be viewed with a resolute hardness of heart, the few, with whom we come occasionally in contact, will be sure to suffer neglect and contumely from us.

Yet again, there are at the North many ardent, devoted friends of the slave, to whom, unless they have forfeited them by misconduct, we owe all the duties of good neighborhood, friendship, and Christian fellowship; and our views of the subject of slavery must determine, whether we shall treat them as deluded, erring, and guilty men, or whether we shall regard them as endowed with the true spirit of charity and philanthropy. They are, many of them, persons of the most exemplary lives in every other point of view,—persons, of whom it is often said, that their anti-slavery principles are their only fault. Is this to be regarded as a heinous fault, worthy of vehement reproof, censure, denunciation, excommunication; or as in itself amiable and commendable? If we are right in considering slavery as a forbidden subject, and the slave as shut out by the will and law of God from our sympathy, prayers, and efforts, then is the anti-slavery man, as such, a disorganizer, a man

full of treason, a dangerous member of society, to be treated with suspicion and distrust. But if, on the other hand, we have duties incumbent on us with reference to slavery, then he, who has the courage to meet these duties with a bold front, is worthy of high esteem and honor, so far as he preserves the meek and gentle spirit of his Master. To be sure, if he be a fanatic, his fanaticism on this, as on any other subject, is proof of a weak head. If he be denunciatory, his bitterness of spirit on this, as on any other subject, betrays a bad temper. But, simply as an anti-slavery man, he is to be regarded with the same esteem, with which we regard any other consistent and devoted laborer in any philanthropic work. But, we repeat it, our duties towards this portion of our fellow-citizens depend upon our views of the evil and the remedy of slavery.

Then again, there is a great deal of emigration from the Northern to the Southern States, and a heavy responsibility rests on us as to the tone of feeling and principle, with which those shall be imbued, who go from among us to communities, where their immediate influence must be given either for or against this form of oppression. New England men, wherever they go, occupy prominent places, and exert a commanding influence. They are more apt to give than to receive law,—to control the current of opinion than to yield to it. In some of the Southern towns and cities, the chief men in every department of business and enterprise are natives of New England. At present, these adopted citizens of the South are, for the most part, among the strongest and least tolerant advocates of slavery. The Editor of the *Southern Review*, a work established chiefly for the maintenance of distinctively Southern principles, is a Northern man. Many of our readers remember the quite recent correspondence of a Church in Savannah with the American Unitarian Association, in connection with their sending home unheard a clergyman, who had been selected for them on the express ground of his standing uncommitted with reference to Northern abolitionism. From their unwillingness to listen for a single Sabbath, or to give the slightest countenance to one, who could be suspected of hostility to Southern institutions, it might be inferred that this parish was composed of people, in whose veins pure Southern blood had flowed for many generations. But, in point of fact, this parish was composed almost entirely of Northern men. A clergyman, who officiated there for a season, can recall the names of but three natives of the South among the male parishioners. Of the three members of the Committee of correspondence with the Unitarian Association, two were Northern men by birth; and still another member of the parish, who bore a prominent part in the transactions relating to Rev. Mr. Motte,

and indeed was an acknowledged leader in all ecclesiastical matters, was a Northern man, and then held an auction every Thursday for the sale of human flesh. These facts we have specified as illustrating the state of principle and feeling which prevails with hardly an exception, among Northern men, who have become citizens of the South. Now there must be something grossly wrong in the state of public feeling at the North, while such men and few others are sent Southward. There must be bitterness at the fountain, whence such streams flow. And we have no doubt that, if the New England people, who are now at the South, had carried with them what ought to be New England principles, and simply lived them out by tacitly declining all connection with slavery and all action in its favor, without any insurrectionary language or movement, they would have done a vast deal towards mollifying the tone of public sentiment at the South, and preparing the way for the gradual emancipation of the enslaved. A healthy and active state of general sentiment at the North is then, in this point of view, if in no other, of prime importance, and would be of extensive and controlling influence.

We have as yet named prominent indeed, yet only secondary features of our position with reference to slavery. We are still more intimately connected with the system. We, the people of the North, are slave-holders and slave-dealers. The Constitution and history of our Federal Government cover a vast amount of pro-slavery recognition, sanction, legislation, and executive action, and for all this the non-slaveholding States are accountable; for they have always had the majority in the national councils, and, had they been true to the principles, for which they professedly contended in the war of the Revolution, the Federal Government would have been clear of this unholy compact. Now what the non-slaveholding states have done, they may undo. What they have established they may abolish. What they have sanctioned they may disavow. Let us then take a cursory view of what they have done, established, and sanctioned; for this is requisite in order to define their position.

Our Constitution embraced at the outset a most unfortunate compromise, guaranteeing the continuance of the slave-trade for twenty years, without providing for its abolition even then; and against this many earnest and fervent voices were raised by not a few of the first and best men in the nation; among whom we would make honorable mention of Joshua Atherton, of New Hampshire, (grandfather of *Hon. Charles G. Atherton*,) who opposed the adoption of the Constitution on this ground alone; for, said he, "If we ratify the Constitution, we become consenters to and partakers in the sin and guilt of this abominable traffic." By the

Constitution, also, a larger than its due share of representation and influence was secured to the Southern States, by reckoning three-fifths of the slaves in the numbers, on which the apportionment of representatives in Congress is made,—an arrangement, by which the Southern minority of the free citizens of the country have been fast approaching a majority in the representation, and will, if the process go on unchecked, soon attain that majority by the increase of slaves in the extreme South, and the creation of new slaveholding states, as in the case of Texas and Florida. There is also an article in the Constitution, which permits the reclaiming of fugitive slaves in the free States, and thus declares our territory, what it has often been made, a hunting ground for slave-drivers. Under this article, according to the construction of our Supreme Judiciary, any citizen of the North, (he need not be black; men as white as most of our readers, have been claimed and seized as slaves at the North,) may be seized and carried into slavery without the form of trial, on the mere affidavit of the claimant before a justice of the peace. The redeeming trait in this article is, that it does not make it incumbent on the State authorities to act in such cases, and its force may be evaded, (as it has been, to the honor of several of the New England States,) by prohibiting, under severe penalties, any of the State functionaries from aiding in the arrest or verification of persons claimed as slaves, and forbidding the use of the jails of the State for the detention of such persons. But still the article is a foul blot upon our Constitution, and a memorial of a sycophancy and subserviency to the South on the part of the North, which has been as the life-blood of Southern slavery.

By the Constitution, Congress has exclusive jurisdiction over the territories belonging to the Union; and, south of thirty-eight and a half degrees of north latitude, Congress has sanctioned slavery in all those territories. Several new slaveholding States have been admitted to the Union; and particularly, in 1820, Missouri, the question of whose admission was made to turn solely on the point of slavery, was admitted with liberty to hold slaves, by means of the infamous defection of Northern members of Congress from the true principles of freedom.

Under the authority of Congress, also, and by the votes and the acquiescence of Northern legislators, slavery and the domestic slave-trade, in its most revolting features, are sustained in the District of Columbia, of which the entire, unrestricted jurisdiction is vested in Congress. There are nowhere in the Union more severe slave-laws than are sanctioned in that District by act of Congress. The barbarity of the slave-laws in force there may be judged of from one single item. A slave, convicted of setting fire to any building, is to have his head cut off, his body divided into quar-

ters, and the parts set up in the most public places. In the very seat of government, any colored person may be apprehended as a fugitive slave ; and, if he proves himself free, he is charged with all the fees and rewards given by law for the apprehension of run-aways, and, upon failure to make payment, he is liable to be sold as a slave. Thus, under the very eye of Congress, a free man of color, on his lawful business, may be arrested, thrown into jail, and, if too poor to pay charges, which range from forty-five to ninety dollars, sold into irredeemable slavery. There have been, however, cases in which blacks thus arrested have been discharged. There was reported to the House of Representatives a case, in which a black man was taken up on suspicion of being a runaway slave, and kept confined *four hundred and five* days, in which time vermin, disease, and misery had deprived him of the use of his limbs, and made him a cripple for life, and he was then discharged because no one would buy him. Yet, while these things are well known in Congress, and are brought before that body by committees of their own, they have repeatedly voted to make no alterations in the slave-laws of the District, and to such votes scores of Northern legislators have recorded their names in the affirmative. Meanwhile the neighboring State of Maryland, from which many of these slave-laws were derived, yielding to the spirit of the age, has expunged the most obnoxious of them from her statute book ; and on her soil, the man, who confesses himself a slave, is released, if his master does not answer an advertisement, and appear to claim him, within a limited time.

Under the eye, and with the sanction of Congress, the District of Columbia is also made the great slave-market of the Union. There have been single numbers of the *National Intelligencer*, that have contained advertisements relating to the purchase or sale of not only hundreds, but even thousands of slaves. In the city of Washington, so lucrative is this trade, that licenses to carry it on, still under the authority of Congress, are given and regularly paid for at a rate prescribed by the city corporation, which has been and probably is now no less than *four hundred dollars*. Northern members of Congress are often compelled to meet droves of slaves on their way to a market or to the river, handcuffed and chained together. This traffic is disgusting to the best people of the District, has been petitioned against by large numbers of them, has been presented as a nuisance by grand juries, has been commented upon with righteous severity in Charges from the Bench, and yet legislators from the non-slaveholding States have not principle, energy, and independence enough to do it away.

By the Constitution, the regulation of commerce between the

several States is vested in Congress, and Congress has enacted laws permitting the slave-trade between the States coastwise in vessels of over forty tons burthen, and prescribing minutely the manifests, forms of entry at the custom-house, and specifications to be made by the masters of such vessels. By the same authority a vast inland slave-trade is carried on, and immense numbers are driven in herds from the Northern to the Southern and South-western extremities of the slave-holding district, often thirty or forty attached to the same long chain, each by a short chain affixed to his iron handcuff. In Maryland and Virginia, this is a business of prime importance; and large, jail-like places of deposit, well supplied with thumb-screws, gags, and cowhides, are scattered at not infrequent intervals over the territory of those States. In 1836, no less than *forty thousand* slaves had been sold out of Virginia within a year, for a sum of not less than *twenty-four millions* of dollars,* and, not long before that date, a distinguished statesman of Virginia publicly declared, that his native State had been converted into "one grand menagerie, where men were reared for the market, like oxen for the shambles."† And all this under the authority of Congress, and with the consent of Northern legislators.

But our Federal Government has not confined its action on this subject within its own jurisdiction. By express votes of Congress, and of course, of Northern members to constitute a majority, the Government has repeatedly negotiated with Great Britain, (though happily with no success, except a paltry pecuniary remuneration in one or two instances,) for the restoration of fugitive slaves from Canada, and of slaves that have been cast by shipwreck upon British soil. And, to cap the climax of degradation, our republic, when the permanence of slavery in the island of Cuba was supposed to be threatened, made to the courts of Madrid and of St. Petersburg, and to the Congress of Panama, the most dolorous representations of the effect, which emancipation in Cuba must needs have upon her own domestic institutions, and intimated in the most explicit terms, that the United States would without hesitation embark in any war, which might be necessary to perpetuate slavery in that island,—yes, pledged the entire strength and resources of this nation, which styles itself free, to keep hundreds of thousands of human beings out of its own precincts in hopeless degradation and bondage.

Now, while such has been the spirit of a large portion of the delegation to Congress from the non-slaveholding States, we can-

* Niles' Register, Oct. 8, 1836.

† Speech of Thomas Jefferson Randolph, in the Virginia Legislature, in 1832.

not regard the long rejection of petitions bearing upon slavery as a matter of surprise, or as furnishing additional ground for moral indignation to an honest and philanthropic heart. Before the right of petition was formally denied, the majority of Northern members had sufficiently shown that there was no right too sacred to be yielded up to Southern dictation; and, as they would at any rate have treated the subject-matter of these petitions with neglect and indignity, it may have been as well for them to do the work in brief, and to save the time and money of the nation by one sweeping vote of rejection.

Such is the amount of action, permission, and sanction, for which we at the North are accountable. To this degree are we slave-holders and slave-dealers. We are not indeed directly responsible for slavery within the borders of the several States. That is their concern. But for every act or recognition on the part of the Federal Government we are accountable,—that is, we the people, not our representatives or rulers, who are our agents, but we individually, whenever we have voted for a man, who was likely to cast a pro-slavery vote in Congress, whenever we have learned with indifference, that our agent had cast such a vote, whenever we have voted a second time for a man, who had once cast such a vote. The acts of our representatives, which we let go by unrebuked, are our acts. When Northern men have thus voted, it has been because their constituents were either indifferent to the whole matter, or strongly tinged with Southern principles. A late member of Congress,* who never failed, when the opportunity offered, to vote in behalf of slavery, not long ago made the following exposé of his political creed: “While in public life, it has ever been, and will ever continue to be, my effort, first to learn, and then to do the will of my constituents.” This man had for several years represented a State where the general tone of public feeling then was either absolute indifference, or a leaning towards the pro-slavery side of all these questions. The use of the representative’s own conscience seems to have grown obsolete, and instructions and pledges have so far supplied its place, that, on all matters of importance, the alternative is obedience or the resignation of one’s office. Thus the burthen rests upon the consciences of the citizens at large.

Such is the position of the people of the North, with regard to slavery. What are the duties growing out of this position?

In the first place, it is undoubtedly the duty of every citizen to take cognizance of the subject, to know what slavery is, and to have a just, and, so far as may be, an adequate idea of its evils and enormities. In judging of Southern slavery, we have no need

* Hon. Henry Hubbard, of New Hampshire.

to discuss the question, whether slavery is intrinsically and under all circumstances an evil and a wrong. It is certainly within the range of abstract possibility, that a state of things might exist, in which something corresponding to the relation of master and slave should be mutually beneficial. Such a state of things did probably exist in the patriarchal families in very early times; and, from all the hints that we can glean of those times, the servants or slaves were generally the privileged party. But this has nothing to do with our negro slavery. The bondage of the African race is the fruit of man-stealing, a crime denounced in the severest terms by revelation, and utterly abhorrent to the very first principles of humanity. Then again, our system of negro slavery sets aside that law of God, by which the marriage covenant is pronounced inviolate and permanent. There are among the slaves no husbands and wives joined till death shall part them. Their union is not marriage, nor is it usually sanctioned by the sacrilegious mockery of a marriage ceremony. Those united for a season may be, without their consent, separated scores or hundreds of miles from each other, and then each is permitted, expected, nay, compelled to enter into a new union, and, perhaps a few months after, into yet another. The leading ecclesiastical bodies at the South have even issued proclamations, declaring that the gospel laws of matrimony are not to be considered as binding upon the slaves, or with reference to them, and that the slave may lawfully change his or her wife or husband with every change of residence. This one feature is sufficient to make the whole system unspeakably degrading and demoralizing, inasmuch as it entirely breaks up the institution of families, which is the choicest instrument of civilization and refinement, the surest bond of virtue, and an essential means of religious culture and discipline. Then too, in most of the Southern States, deep and hopeless degradation is entailed upon the slaves, by their being wholly cut off from the means of education; stripes, fines, and imprisonment impending over him or her, who would teach a slave to read, or give him a Bible. Of course, this system precludes all just and accurate knowledge of truth and duty, and all opportunity to rise in the scale of intellectual and moral being. Under the present state of things, the female slaves are necessarily, and almost universally, made victims of the licentiousness of the whites. The most decisive and unanimous testimony is borne on this point by every honest witness.

With regard to the moral condition of the slaves, our fairest estimate must of course be that founded on Southern testimony. In a report adopted and published by the Presbyterian Synod of South

Carolina and Georgia, made but a few years since, it is said, "that the negroes are destitute of the privileges of the gospel, and ever will be, under the present state of things,"—that they "will bear comparison with heathen in any country in the world,"—that "not a twentieth part" of the slaves attend public worship. A writer in the *Western Luminary*, a respectable religious newspaper in Kentucky, says:

"I proclaim it abroad to the Christian world, that heathenism is as real in the slave States as it is in the South Sea Islands, and that our negroes are as justly objects of attention to the American and other boards of foreign missions, as the Indians of the western wilds. What is it constitutes heathenism? Is it to be destitute of a knowledge of God,—of his holy word,—never to have heard scarcely a sentence of it read through life,—to know little or nothing of the history, character, instructions, and mission of Jesus Christ,—to be almost totally devoid of moral knowledge and feeling, of sentiments of probity, truth, and chastity? If this constitutes heathenism, then are these thousands, millions of heathens in our beloved land. There is one topic to which I will allude, which will serve to establish the heathenism of this population. I allude to the universal licentiousness which prevails. It may be said emphatically, that chastity is no virtue among them,—that its violation neither injures female character in their own estimation, nor in that of their master or mistress. No instruction is ever given, no censure dispensed. I speak not of the world, I speak of Christians generally."

Compared with this mental and moral degradation, (we might almost say *annihilation*, for the system does all that it can to sink the man into the brute,) the mere physical sufferings connected with it, severe as they are, dwindle into insignificance. These may perhaps be often overrated; the moral evils no imagination can overrate. As to the fare, as to the clothing of the slaves, it is indeed scanty and poor, bearing no comparison, at least on the plantations, with that of free laborers at the North, yet much better, no doubt, than the English manufacturers and many classes of free laborers in Europe can procure. With regard to cruel treatment, there are doubtless many humane masters; and there is a degree to which the slaves are protected by law, that is, they cannot be killed in mere sport or wantonness. But the slave-laws of all the Southern States are written in blood, and are a burning shame for a nation that boasts of its freedom, and a foul outrage upon humanity. In Virginia, there are *seventy-one* offences, which, subjecting a white man only to imprisonment, are in a negro punished with death. In Georgia, any person may inflict *twenty* lashes on the bare back of a slave found off the

plantation where he belongs without a written license; and there are very many Southern laws, by which, not for crime, but for merely nominal offences, any irresponsible person whatsoever, without the intervention of a magistrate, may inflict from *twenty* to *forty* lashes. By the laws of Maryland, a slave may, for riding a horse without leave, and for other like insignificant offences, be whipt, have his ears cropt, or be branded on the cheek with the letter R. But we will not go on with the loathsome and harrowing recital; we might fill many pages with it; nor do we believe that there stands written, whether in fact or fiction, poetry or prose, anything so horrible, so shocking to every sentiment of humanity, as the statute-books of the Southern States.

In addition to the legal cruelty to which the slave is liable, he is left in a great degree unprotected against private violence and wrong. To force applied for however unlawful or brutal purposes, the slave can make no resistance. Passive submission, not only to one's own master, but to the whole white population, is enjoined by the severest penalties. There are some cases, in which a slave, for merely striking a white man, may be lawfully killed on the spot; and death, in Georgia for the second offence, and for the third in South Carolina, is the legal penalty for a slave's striking any white person, under circumstances of whatever provocation, or in resistance of any treatment, however unlawful, brutal, or malicious. The slave is cut off from the benefit of trial by jury, except in capital cases; and in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana, life may be legally taken without the verdict of a jury. In Louisiana, if the court is equally divided as to the guilt of a slave, judgment is rendered against him. In 1832, *thirty-five* slaves were executed at one time in Charleston, S.C., without the intervention of a jury. The degree of protection which the slave enjoys against over-working, and the security in which he holds any little property of his own, may be judged of from the fact, that the lowest prescribed limit of a slave's daily labor is *fifteen* hours, that in several of the States a slave is not permitted to raise cotton or to keep domestic animals for his own benefit, and that in several of the States masters are forbidden, under heavy penalties, to let their slaves work for wages for their own benefit. The extent to which the slave's life is protected may be inferred from the law of South Carolina, which provides that, if a slave be murdered by a white person in a sudden passion, or by excessive punishment, the man who kills him shall pay a moderate fine, and be imprisoned six months.

Now these laws are not merely indications of what may in extreme cases be done to, or suffered by the slaves. Laws are the surest index of the state of public sentiment in a community, and

these laws show in what light the rights, the comfort, and the life of the slave are regarded at the South. These laws are the true criterion of judgment. Individual cases of hardship and gross cruelty may exist under the most humane laws, wherever man has power over his fellow-beings. We have ourselves known, in our own neighborhood, cases of the cruel treatment of children bound out at service, which, had they occurred at the South, would have figured largely in anti-slavery reports; but they would here have been the subjects of the severest legal animadversion, and would have roused the indignation of the whole community, while at the South they would have been far within the liberty granted by law, and would have excited no surprise or censure. We doubt not that there are very many humane and conscientious masters at the South,—many, who bear the burden of slavery unwillingly, and who cherish a Christian sense of duty towards this species of property, from which they know not how to escape. But we want no other proof than the advertisements in Southern newspapers, to convince us that cases of gross inhumanity are appallingly frequent; and even in the cities, where the slaves are supposed to enjoy a condition of greater comfort than on the plantations, the severe whipping of adult slaves, both male and female, either by the master or by the public functionary appointed for that purpose, is a common and habitual thing.

Such is slavery,—the institution for which our kind construction, our tolerance, our sympathy, our tacit approval, is often claimed. Such is the slavery, which we Northern men help sustain in the District of Columbia, and in the territories under the national jurisdiction, and which, in the portions of the country where it has the deepest dye, is replenished by a traffic conducted under our sanction and authority. Such is the burden, which, as it exists in the Southern States of the Union, claims not indeed our interference until it is solicited, but our prayers and our sympathy both for the enslaved and for their masters. And can it be Heaven's will, that we should close our hearts against the knowledge of such wrong and misery? Shall constitutions and enactments restrain prayer, and make void the law of God and of Jesus, which says, "All ye are brethren?" But what shall we, what can we lawfully do for the benefit of the slaves taken collectively?

In the first place, we can and should pray for the slave and his master, in public and in private, not in mere form, but heartily, fervently. And this we say, not professionally, but because we believe in the efficacy of prayer. The evil is one of appalling magnitude. The stone is very great. We cannot roll it away unless God strengthen us and teach us how. But if all Christian people at the North would unite in earnest supplication to God for

their unhappy brethren, he would open their eyes to modes of influence and effort now hidden. And on a subject so exciting, the calm and gentle spirit of prayer is especially needed to purge philanthropy from all base admixture of earthly passion, to temper it with justice and candor, and to prevent sympathy with the oppressed from degenerating into hatred and vindictive feelings towards the oppressor. We fear that on this subject there has been too much preaching compared with the praying.

But we ought to preach as well as pray, and to write as well as preach. The subject is an open one, and demands discussion; nor by its discussion can wrong be done to any, so long as the laws of truth and of brotherly love are kept inviolate, and all bitterness and wrath are put away. It is often said, that slavery is not a subject for the pulpit. But why not? A just moral perspective will not indeed ensure it the broad and engrossing place in pulpit services, which some assign to it. But we regard it as a fit subject for discussion in the stated services of the sanctuary, because slavery is a moral rather than a physical evil, and presents its most alarming and revolting aspects in a Christian point of view; because the evil is so desperate, that no power short of the omnipotence of Christian truth and love can reach it; because the slaves and the slave-holders are our brethren, children of our Father, bound to us by religious ties, and it is therefore fitting that we should bear them on our minds and hearts in our Father's house; because, if we have any duties towards them, they are religious duties, and therefore within the legitimate scope of the pulpit; and, finally, because the subject is encompassed with so many difficulties, and needs for the solution of them so much of the wisdom that is from above, and for its discussion without offence so much of that calmness and meekness, which should characterize the pulpit more universally than it does, that we may well apply to it the language and imitate the example of the Psalmist, with regard to perplexities of a different class; "If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God." Let then a firm and strong disapproval of the whole system breathe from the pulpit and the press, throughout the non-slaveholding States. Let no man be ashamed, or afraid to utter or to write what he believes and feels. Let this state of public sentiment be cherished at the North, without any aggressive movement towards the South; and it cannot but make itself felt there. It has there even now many hearts ready, yearning to respond to it. And those at the South, who cling to slavery, depend for their support to a very great degree upon popular feeling at the North, and feel fortified by the

strong pro-slavery ground taken by the Northern press and pulpit, more than by any or all things else. While slavery has its friends at the North, its hold upon the South cannot be relaxed. But right feeling here will work its way there. Our literature tinged with it will be read and felt there. Our great political orators once imbued with it will send the truth home to Southern hearts in breathing thoughts and burning words. Our ecclesiastical bodies are more or less intimately connected with the Southern church, and their unanimous, decided, and strong sentiment will soon find a response from every devout and intelligent Christian at the South, and will awaken to sincere penitence and a better mind those portions of the Southern church, which have entered into willing compact with this iniquity. Let the whole North be set right on this subject, and there would be no call for active interference or expostulation. Slavery would expire without a blow. It could not live a day without sympathy and support from beyond its own borders. Public sentiment is not the lame and slow agent which it once was; but it moves on wings of fire, and is like lightning which glances through the whole firmament with a flash.

In addition to this general expression and full establishment of right feeling upon this subject, it is most manifestly our duty to undo our own work,—to abolish slavery and all operations connected with it, so far as the field of our jurisdiction extends. This is the most momentous subject of national legislation; nor can we hope for the smile of Providence upon any of our counsels, while this is overlooked. We are prone to deem it of the utmost importance, (and it certainly is important,) that our legislators should be sound in the faith on such subjects as the tariff and the currency, on which men yet may honestly differ,—is it not of incomparably greater importance that they should be men, who will not by their continued subserviency to a system, which no Northern man in his heart approves, call down the judgments of long-suffering Heaven upon our land? The domestic slave-trade should be stopped; and that movement would insure speedy emancipation in the slave-breeding states, where slaves are confessedly not worth keeping for their labor, and confine the evil to the extreme South and Southwest. The portion of the country under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal Government should be purged of this contamination. Let it be done by purchase,—it would not cost a third of what the Florida war cost, and it would be far better to pay men for what is not their property, than to let the most shadowy suspicion of injustice rest upon a philanthropic movement. Let the whole North too, as one man, resist the admission into the confederation of any new slaveholding member. Let all the non-slaveholding States also follow the noble

example already set, and forbid the agency of their magistrates and the use of their jails for the detention and restoration of fugitive slaves. Let the entire strength of the non-slaveholding States also be put forth in behalf of such amendments to the Constitution, as shall blot out all recognition of slavery, and apportion representation to the actual number of free citizens in the several States.

But, on all these subjects, the present is the time for prompt and energetic counsel and action. Let new slaveholding States be admitted into the Union, or created from conquered territory, (and this may take place during the very next session of Congress, and scores of Northern votes be cast in favor of it,) and not improbably the majority of representatives at the end of another ten years will belong to the slaveholding States, and the chains of slavery will then be riveted, till the iniquity of the nation is full, and our name and place shall be blotted out from among the nations of the earth. Is it said, that a decided stand against slavery on the part of the non-slaveholding States would destroy the Union? Let it then be destroyed. If the Union cannot be preserved, and the laws of God be at the same time kept, better that human compacts yield, and God be obeyed at all hazards. In saying this, let us not be understood as speaking treasonably of our national Union. We prize and love the Union, and sincerely pray that God may keep it. But we expect safety for it only by its conformity to the divine will and law. We do not believe that it is threatened by any philanthropic principle or movement. On the other hand, were slavery removed from a place so near its foundations, it would be built up at once in the strength and beauty of liberty and virtue, and would be the desire of all nations, the glory of the whole earth. But, if the Union is threatened, it is by the reciprocal encroachments of the South and sycophancy of the North, and by the reckless, unprincipled tone and spirit thus given to the whole legislation and action of the Federal Government. There is no part of the national administration not infected by the spirit of slavery. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." The South is arrogating to itself a vast preponderance of government patronage and influence, and dictating laws for the whole Union, while Northern men, making shipwreck of principle on the subject of slavery, preserve it on no other subject, and are pushing the country as fast as they can into misrule and anarchy. The only salvation of the country is for the non-slaveholding States to assert their own principles, and to send to the national legislature men of principle, Christians, philanthropists, men that fear God,—not pledged and packed men, but men whose consciences their constituents can trust,—not men, who

need to be instructed, but such as shall go thoroughly furnished for every good work.

We have as yet said nothing of anti-slavery societies. So far as those societies have breathed a denunciatory spirit, we heartily disapprove of it. Yet they have not been the aggressors, nor can there have been anything in their most bitter speeches and writings, which can bear comparison with the rancor of their assailants, and the contumely and injury, which have been heaped upon them without redress. They have never mobbed defenceless women, nor stormed churches, nor set fire to public buildings, nor taken the lives of their opponents. We would far sooner have stood in their ranks than in those of their adversaries; for, whatever their excesses may have been, they have had principle on their side, though we wish that they had always had grace, after their great Master's example, when they were reviled, not to revile again, when they suffered, to threaten not, but to commit themselves to him that judgeth righteously. Had they all breathed this spirit, as many of them uniformly have, their cause would by this time have outgrown all opposition. Had such men as the lamented Follen, Channing and Ware, and some living luminaries of the church, whom we could name, (men who never harbored an unkind thought, or wrote or uttered an ungentle word,) given the whole tone to the anti-slavery movement, we should by this time have seen the most glorious and successful reformation in modern Christendom far advanced towards its completion. But though the professed advocates of this cause may not have done all that they might, or so well as they might, though they have been men of like passions with other men, and not angels, which reformers are always expected to be, and never are, they deserve at our hands decided vindication, as to the alleged injury to their own cause, which has been charged upon them.

It is said, that their movement has closed many hearts against the claims of the slaves. Many hearts have indeed remained closed; but, in addition to the many thousands of active and zealous members of anti-slavery organizations, there is a far more general and strong feeling on the subject throughout the entire North, than when this movement commenced. Nor was this a new movement. There had been, all over the non-slaveholding States, and in the more northerly of the slave-holding States, abolition societies under that express name, in active operation for many years from the adoption of the Federal Constitution, and in the Northern and Middle States till 1820. In looking over their reports and memorials, we find that they used as strong and earnest language on the subject of slavery, as can have been used in the most vehement recent publications. Their reprobation of the

whole system was unlimited and intensely emphatic; and they numbered among their active members the confessedly first and best men in Church and State. They poured in upon Congress petitions and memorials against the admission of Missouri into the Union, and in these documents the strongest, most uncompromising anti-slavery ground was assumed, as the unanimous expression of Northern sentiment. That was their last great battle. Defeated then through the treachery of men, on whom they implicitly depended, they left the field, and were probably disbanded; for we find no subsequent traces of their existence.

The defection of the North from its legitimate principles on that occasion no doubt deadened the general conscience; and little was said or thought on the subject of slavery for the succeeding ten or twelve years. Meanwhile new relations were growing up between the North and the South. The Southern cotton trade during this interval rose from utter insignificance to a place second to no other branch of business. The manufactories of the New England States became numerous and extensive, and depended on the South for their raw material. Our New England ships, shut out by universal peace from the general carrying trade, which they had once enjoyed, found the transportation of Southern cotton their surest and most lucrative employment. Thus had the North in a very brief space of time become connected with the South by the closest and most constraining pecuniary ties, so that the republication of views, which twenty years before it had been scandalous not to admit, now touched new chords of interest, on which it jarred harsh and unwelcome music. The principles were not new; but the relations of Northern men had become changed.

Maryland and Virginia abolitionism owes its decline to a similar chain of causes. For many years slavery had been in those States an intolerable pecuniary burden. For the ordinary operations of agriculture, slave labor was well known to be less lucrative than free labor; and yet the latter could not be had, while the former was employed. Much of the cultivated land of those States was exhausted by the perpetual succession of the same crops, and it could not be improved, nor could new land be brought under cultivation, without a larger capital in human stock, than owners could generally afford, or the profits of agriculture authorize. The African slave-market was open until 1808, and the more Southern States could buy slaves stolen ready grown in Africa, cheaper than they could be raised in Virginia and Maryland; and the suspension of the African slave trade left the country fully stocked, if not overstocked with slaves, and, Southern industry remaining nearly stationary for a series of years, the slave-growing States found no regular or lucrative market for their

increase. No wonder that they talked loud and long of emancipation. They were undoubtedly on the eve of decided action. But when cotton, from being little cultivated, became in a few years the great staple of the South, the demand for slaves grew large and constant, the raising of slaves for the market became the most lucrative business in the country, and Virginia and Maryland found a mine of wealth in an institution, which had long been draining their resources.* What room then is there for surprise, that public feeling in these States should have undergone an entire revulsion? And is it not much more reasonable to attribute this revulsion to new mercenary motives operating in behalf of slavery, than to the re-echoing from the North of the very sentiments of Washington, Jefferson, and Randolph,—of sentiments, which for nearly fifty years had found free and fervent utterance in the legislature of Virginia?

It is often said, that the anti-slavery movement at the North has been the cause of many hardships and disabilities to the slaves at the South, particularly of the restrictions upon their movements and social gatherings, and of the laws against their being taught to read. But we find on examination, that most of these effects preceded their alleged cause. The American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in December, 1833; the New England Society, which accomplished but little, a year or two sooner. It was not till 1834, or 1835, that the recent anti-slavery movement became of sufficient magnitude to attract attention at the South, or to be generally regarded at the North as anything more than an ephemeral effort of a few visionary and fanatical philanthropists. But the severest of the slave-laws are as old as the constitutions of the respective States; and most of the additional restrictions and disabilities, as well those affecting the free blacks as the slaves, may be traced back to at least ten or twelve years before the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The prohibition of Sunday and other schools for the education of slaves, we can trace back in South Carolina to 1824; and, on looking over Niles's Register for the five or six years next preceding and following that date, we find numerous enactments of the same kind in that and other Southern States, and very many indications of an anxious and disturbed state of feeling with reference to the negro population, which we do not find within the last few years.† Possibly laws of this character may have been more rigorously executed

* In 1829, the value of Slaves exported from Virginia, was computed at *a million and a half* of dollars; in 1836, at *twenty-four millions*. See Debates in the Virginia Convention for 1829, p. 99. Niles' Register, Oct. 8, 1836.

† Niles' Register, April 21, 1821; March 15, 1823; Dec. 26, 1829; Jan. 16, 1830; April 24, 1830, &c. &c.

since the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society; but very few such laws have been enacted since that time. The state of things, which Northern abolitionists have been so freely charged with bringing about, existed in full during the interval when the North hardly lifted a voice against slavery. With regard to the present condition of the slaves, we have unimpeachable testimony that they are better treated than formerly; and this is doubtless to be attributed to the influence of public opinion at the North, even in the partial and distorted forms in which it has reached the people of the South. It is said in an article in defence of slavery in the *Southern Review*, "The fact is notorious, that slaves are better treated now than formerly, and that their condition is still improving." Gen. Scott, in a letter, in which he expresses strong disapprobation of the anti-slavery movement, makes the same assertion. So much for the alleged injury to the slave from his Northern friends.

It is also said, that the efforts of Northern abolitionists have fanned an insurrectionary spirit at the South. Against this charge there is abundant *prima facie* evidence, without our looking into the history of slave insurrections. It is well known that living anti-slavery agents are not suffered to go at large in the Southern States. The only effort that can be made, therefore, at the South, is by sending anti-slavery books, pamphlets, and newspapers. These are indeed sent and circulated in large numbers, not among the slaves, (for the slaves cannot read,) but among the masters; and, if the slaves are made acquainted with their contents, it must be through the gratuitous agency of their masters. In point of fact, all the great slave rebellions on record took place before the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The writer in the *Southern Review*, already referred to, says, that "under no circumstances can a servile war ever take place;" that "*in vain* has the United States mail been infested and burdened with incendiary documents;" and that "no temptations or artifices can seduce the slaves from their allegiance." This *Review* is published at Charleston, which was the seat in 1823 and 1832 of extensive negro insurrections, discovered just on the eve of execution. It is well known to many of our readers, that the whole population of Charleston was, for a long series of years, in a state of perpetual alarm and apprehension from the slaves, and that South Carolina took the lead in those legislative restrictions, which imply a state of dread and consternation. It is truly gratifying, while anti-slavery principles are so rapidly extending themselves at the North, to find descriptions of a state of entire and fearless security emanating from the highest literary authority in that very city and State, in which, prior to the anti-

slavery movement, the most fearful elements of combustion were believed to exist.

Is it farther said, that the anti-slavery movement at the North is entirely devoid of influence upon the South? Not thus do Southern people say. We might fill half a score of pages with unimpeachable Southern testimony to the effect of this movement upon the Southern mind and heart. Judge Upshur said, in his prospectus for the establishment of the Southern Review: "The defence of the peculiar institutions of the slave-holding States is the great and leading object of the work. That they are in danger, it would be folly to disguise. A party has arisen in the other States, whose object is the overthrow of the relation between master and slave; and from present appearances it will continue to increase till the object it has in view is consummated, unless efficient measures be taken to arrest further progress." The editor of the South Carolina Messenger, in earnestly soliciting subscriptions for this same work, says: "If your institutions are ever to be defended, no time is to be lost. Delay, in all cases dangerous, would be fatal in this." The North Carolina Watchman says: "We are inclined to believe there is more abolitionism at the South, than prudence will permit to be openly avowed." A letter from the Maryville Theological Seminary to the editor of the Emancipator says: "At least one half of the students of this theological institution are decided abolitionists, and are very much strengthened by perusing the publications sent by you." A gentleman of Frederick County, Md., writes: "The anti-slavery cause is rapidly gaining ground in this section of the country. Three years ago, abolitionist and insurrectionist were interchangeable terms, and an abolition paper a prodigy; now anti-slavery papers are read regularly by our most respectable and intelligent citizens." Gen. Duff Green writes: "We believe that the South has nothing to fear from a servile war. We do not believe that the abolitionists intend to excite the slaves to insurrection. We believe that we have most to fear from the organized action upon the consciences and fears of the slave-holders themselves from the insinuation of their dangerous heresies into our schools, our pulpits, and our domestic circles."

We have, we trust, been successful in defending the anti-slavery organization from some of the grave charges, which have been made against it. But it is not by societies alone that the work can be accomplished. They can only sow the seed; and this they have done faithfully, diligently, even if not always in good temper. It remains for us, citizens, Christians, to supersede them, (as every true friend of the cause will be grateful to have them superseded,) by adopting, all as one, the great principles, which they have cherished.